

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(X) Release ( ) Excise ( ) Deny

Exemption(s):

( ) In Part (X) In Full

( ) Classify as ( ) Extend as ( ) Downgrade to

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

April 18, 1979

TO: HA - Ms. Patt Derian  
FROM: HA/HR - Patrick J. Flood  
SUBJECT: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo

Each Thursday afternoon, the Mothers gather in a different church, say the Rosary, and march briefly around the nearest plaza or park. They met in a church near the Embassy during my stay in Buenos Aires. I was told that they had chosen it because of my presence in town. (I had planned to join them anyway, and this made it convenient.)

I broke free from an Embassy meeting just in time to see them streaming out of the church. I introduced myself to some of the marchers, and all at once they gathered around me asking questions and telling me about the agony they and thousands of other Argentines are experiencing as a result of the disappearances. Pretty soon all 120-150 marchers (including a few men) had surrounded me, everyone talking at once.

Some people assumed I was from the IAHRRC, or from the Embassy. I said, "no, I am from the Department of State in Washington; I work in the human rights office." Some still seemed to have a little trouble placing me, so I said "I work with Patricia Derian." That did it. Everyone suddenly smiled, repeated your name, said "she is our saint, she is our hope", and burst into applause. We were all in the park by now. They did not want to let me go. "Do you think our children are alive?" "Are they going to set them free, if they are?" Why don't they tell us something? Will the OAS Commission be able to help us? What can you do?" I told them I had not come with answers to all of their questions, but had come to express in this public way our solidarity with their cause and our sharing of their grief, and our commitment to do all in our power to advance the cause for which they marched and prayed every week. I said I was speaking for you and brought

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personal greetings from you. They asked me to return their thanks and greetings to you. They thanked me, I returned to the Embassy, and the group dispersed.

cc: HA - Mr. Schneider  
HA - Mr. Cohen  
HA - Mr. Salmon  
HA/HR - Ms. Bowie  
HA/HR - Ms. Bova  
HA/HR - Ms. Cohen

Drafted by: HA/HR:PJFlood:bdr  
04/18/79:21180

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